—Black voting power

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Baltimore and other major cities was still a movement dominated by professional and upper middle class blacks at the end of the Fifties. The soldiers of that era were the black men and women who had fought or worked during World War II, brought their homes and had good jobs or professions; but were still unable to enjoy fair fair representation or the other major benefits enjoyed by mainstream society.

A local political reform movement was also on the rise through the Fifties and into the Sixties. Opposition to the bosses coalesced during this era, and eventually led to their loss of power.

By 1954 Baltimore's pattern of genteel segregation had created a majority of black voters in the Fourth District. The westward movement of blacks, especially those who could afford to move into the more expensive homes in the western edge of the district, displaced the traditional Jewish populace. But more importantly, the migration and population increase represented a shift in the traditional alignment of black voters in the two major political parties.

The traditional preponderance in the Republican party was due to two factors. One was the carry-over from the age-old voting habits of the black community. Secondly, a new bulk of black Republican voters were added to the rolls during Cole's successful 1954.

But the Republicans were a definite minority in the city and state. Little patronage or real political power could be developed as a Republican officeholder. The Democratic party was where the real power and influence lay; and Pollack still controlled that party in the district and throughout the city.

Despite the growing number of black voters in the Fourth District, Pollack was initially unwilling to give his support to a black. But Cole's election forced his hand. In 1955, a yerar after Cole's surprising victory, Pollack began to field his own black candidates. He backed his first black primary election candidate, Walter Dixon, in the Fourth District Councilmanic race. Dixon won handily, and became the first black since 1931 to hold a seat in the City Council. However, Dixon usually voted with the Pollack forces in the City Council.

A year later, Pollack formed an integrated ticket of three blacks and four whites to sweep the six House of Delegates and one Senate seat of the Fourth District.

His major target was Cole. Because each district had only one senator, the seat carried with it greater power than that of a House of Delegates member.

A successful black businessman and politician, J. Alvin (Mickey) Jones, was tapped by Pollack to run against Cole. Two other blacks, irma Dixon, a schoolteacher, and Arlington Phillips, a funeral home director, rounded out the team. All three of the black candidates had been beneficiaries of Pollack patronage in one form or another. They were all expected to represent the interests of the Pollack faction in the General Assembly.

Welcome and her husband, physician Henry C. Welcome, mobilized a campaign built around the Morgan State University brain trust, led by political science professor G. James Fleming. They attracted the energies of the new generation of black leadership. Men such as Glenn, who would eventually become the state's Human Relations Commission head; Sam Daniels, future executive of the Council on Equal Business Opportunity, Cole, AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper editor C. W. Mackay, publisher Carl Murphy, Urban League director Furman Templeton, and ministers timothy Boddie and Marion Bascom helped coordinate the campaign.

The campaign became a crusade of Baltimore's black community, a crusade of men and women with the brains and skill to help run the city, but cursed by discrimination to live in a second-class world.

"This was the first real coming together of the black community, said Glenn. "At this period, we were just feeling our way and getting our sealegs, as it wewre. It started with Harry Cole's election, then each year blacks began to get more strength and more confidence..."

The campaign also attracted support from the reform movement. For example Julian Lapides, who would go on to become a Baltimore State Senator, remembered the enthusiasm Verda's campaign sparked among young white liberals of the late Fifties.

His fledgling political organization, the Mount Royal Democrats, were based partly in the Fourth District. Lapides said the membership made a decision to help beat back Pollack by supporting Verda. Verda's success helped set the stage for the mayoral election in 1959, when they and other reform political organizations helped smash the fourth-term mayoral hopes of the incumbent, D'Alesandro.

Welcome organized her friends into "Women For Welcome," and began campaigning heavily. Utilizing the services of silken-voiced announcer and singer Chuck Richards, she taped a series of slick radio programs. On the shows, she would preach against the Pollack faction, paint herself as the reform candidate, and host other reform movement figures. Her efforts paid off, as she was the only non-Pollack Democrat to win in the primaries.

The outcome of the primary election set the stage for one of the most bitterly fought Fourth District elections in years. In 1954, Pollack and other established political leaders had misread the signs of change as a result underestimated the voting strength of the black community. But in 1958, they were ready for the two Coles and Hatchett.

The Pollack Democratic candidates won all but one of the seven seats at issue in the 1958 primary election. Truly Hatchett lost the Democratic nomination, and Welcome emerged as the only independent Democratic winner.

On the Republican side, Harry Cole and Emory Cole won their party's nomination, but now faced a wary, prepared Pollack in their quest for the general election victory.

Carl Murphy convinced a group of blacks to form a coalition ticket which would unite black Democratic and Republican candidates. State Sen. Cole would lead the ticket, which eventually would contain Welcome, Irma Dixon, Emory Cole, Bertha Winston, and Daniel Spaulding.

Welcome was an independent Democrat, both Coles, Spaulding and Winston were veteran Republicans, and Dixon was a Pollack Democrat. She refused to formally join the coalition ticket, despite her inclusion by the group. She remained a loyal Pollack candidate throughout the campaign.

In the summer of 1958, Murphy pushed to consolidate the black political movement by calling for a black summit conference. With the power of the AFRO-AMERICAN Newspaper behind him, he was able to attract a wide cross-section of black religious, community, and academic leaders.

A pamphlet advertising the convention illustrated the high-minded goals of the organizers, who made common cause with similar liberation movements around the world.

"Today's colored citizen, a dweller in the space age, is yet confined to a handplow, horse and buggy existence by those who would maintain the status quo of a second-hand citizenship," it read. "The crisis and temper of our times demand that we, as top leaders in our state of Maryland, meet and plan together on a statewide basis for the first time in our history.

The whole world is a ferment; America is faced with making a democracy a reality, efforts to continue our economic progress, struggling to lead the free world and to stem the tide of Communism . . . As long as Dr. Martin Luther King can be outraged in Alabama, we in Maryland are threatened."

The conference, held on September 1958, was a tremendous success. The coalition ticket was formally endorsed by about 300 representatives. More than 300 delegates at the convention pledged their support to the ticket, and a massive voter registration drive, spearheaded by the Baltimore branch of the NAACP, was started.

The long-range fruits of the summit conference would be harvested for many years to come. Many of the organizers and participants continued their advocacy and association through the years. Baltimore's heirarchial structure in the black community can, in many cases, be traced directly to the relationships fostered or initiated during that conference.

But the immediate effect of the summit was to mobilize support for the coalition. More than 30,000 new voters would be registered throughout the city by election eve.. Black awareness of the significance of the election was heightened by the continued support given the coalition by prominent ministers, community leaders, and the Baltimore AFRO-AMERICAN Newspapers. The summit fanned the fires of

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WHITE demonstrators in South Baltimore protest blacks swimming in city pools.

Photo courtesy of Enoch Pratt Free Library

OLD NEIGHBORHOOD — Dolphin Street, as seen looking southeast to Hoffman St. Notice the trolley car lines in this 1940s photograph.

How Harry Mayo, Jr. turned rust into gold...legally.

It all started with some rusted steering wheels. Harry Mayo, Jr. saw a batch of damaged wheels, waiting to be retooled, rusting outside an auto plant and had a brilliant idea: If he could make them rustproof, retooling would be easier, and he could make some money.

Of course, Harry had no idea how to do it, but that didn't stop him. He put together a team of amateur chemists from a local university and, after many disappointing experiments, they developed a formula that did the job. Today his company, Mayo Industries, supplies over $3 million worth of parts to several General Motors divisions.

This proves two things. That nothing can stop a person who refuses to stop, and that General Motors wants to do business with people like Harry Mayo, Jr. Last year we spent over a billion dollars with minority suppliers. We've also placed nearly a billion dollars in minority-owned banks, and established scholarships at minority colleges and universities.

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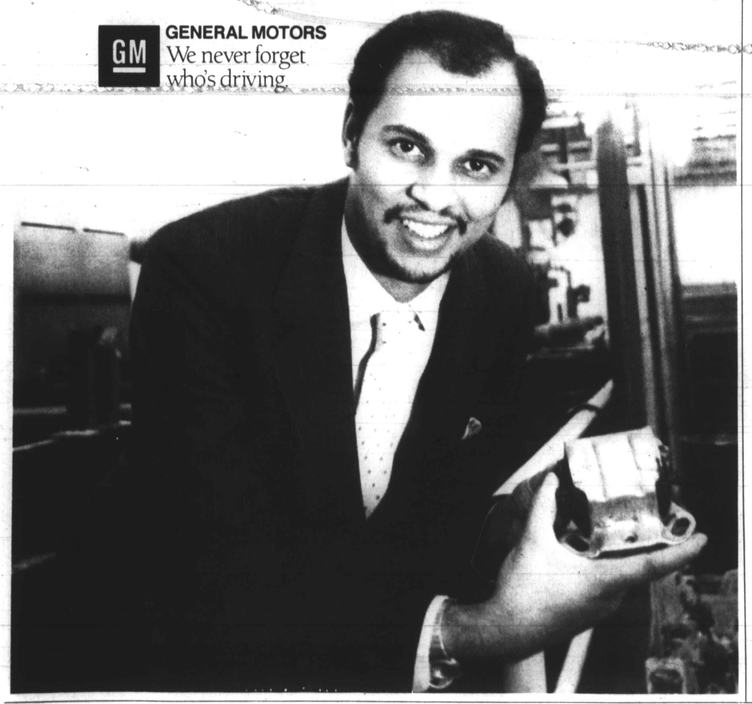
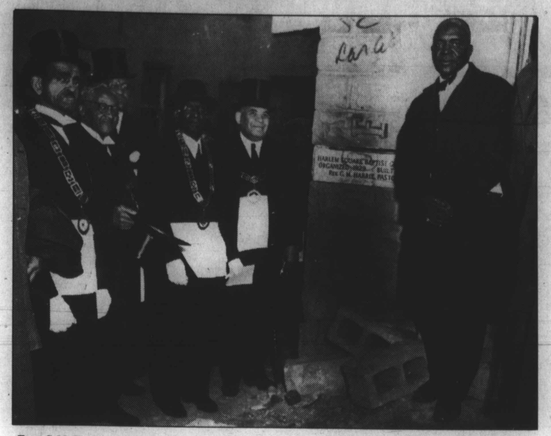


—Our neighborhoods



Rev. G.M. Harris, left, and a contigent of Masons lay the Cornerstone at Harlem Square Baptist Church in this 1946 AFRO file photo.

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influence of their respective organizations to improve the community.

But the advent of World War II and the mass migration of blacks to Baltimore soon swelled the compact black neighborhoods.

Baltimore's population grew by 69,500 between 1940 and 1945. The Pennsylvania Avenue corridor was severely strained by the influx. At one point the area was so congested it became known as the tuberculosis ward of the city. One contemporary newspaper story told of a man who was able rented out his bathroom as living quarters to willing tenants.

The population of the 1940 census tract which included Harlem Park numbered about 8,400. They lived in only 1,903 recorded housing units. Many families were literally piled on top of each other.

The congestion was soon relieved by a dramatic shift in housing patterns following World War II.

White veterans and defense workers used GI benefits and the wages they had accumulated to move away from the center city ring surrounding the old black communities.

Almost overnight the dams barring blacks from escaping the central city were removed. A general exodus westward occured as blacks began to move into west and northwest Baltimore. They soon filled neighborhoods vacated by whites moving to Arbutus or Catonsville and Jews moving further out along Reisterstown Road towards Pikesville.

But the rapid change in neighborhoods was not accomplished without some pain. Money was not enough to rise above the pattern of unequal treatment.

Homes were harder or more expensive to finance for blacks in changing neighborhoods, but easier to sell for whites. Blacks had to pay a sort of tax for the right to move to better neighborhoods.

An Urban League study of housing sales to blacks in the western half of the old Fourth District showed that blacks paid more for their homes than whites had paid. Homes in the 2700 block of N. Longwood Street near Hanlon Park cost white buyers an average of $11,500 between 1949 and 1951.

Those homes cost an average of $900 more when sold to blacks four and five years later.

And Morris Goldseker, a sharp real estate agent, is probably still remembered with shame and anger by countless blacks who paid him three and four times the actual worth of their second-hand West side homes.

Integration also spelled the decline of a host of black institutions. Sess' had to close as blacks with money moved out of the restaurant's neighborhood and began eating their meals at white restaurants. The Baltimore Afro-American lost talented staff members, advertising and readership to white papers.

Provident Hospital was finally forced to close its doors, partly because blacks no longer had to go there for treatment. Black schools, from Douglass High School to Morgan State University and Coppin State College, began to lost talented students who opoted instead for Poly's "A" course or prestigious white colleges.

But perhaps more importantly, neighborhoods ebgan to die.

Probably one of the most ironic examples of neighborhood transformation lies south of the Inner Harbor There, one can find the highest housing prices in the city, built upon the remains of a once-thriving black community. The area is among one of the original sites of black settlement in Baltimore.

There, generations of men once went down to the waterfronts to unload the flotilla of freighters lining the docks. The children went to schools such as No. 126, located near Heniretta and Montgomery Sts. Th corners were once dotted with small shops and salons. Sundays the church goers would flock to Ebenezer Baptist Church.

But the blacks families who could afford to leave joined the westward migration of the 1950's and abandoned the community. The harbor renaissance chased more blacks out of their homes, and the area has been rebuilt or gentrified.

Every year, old-line South Baltimoreans and their descendants gather at a social hall west of their old neighborhood to celebrate and reminisce.

But for many of them, the old community has been transformed into a neighborhood they can barely recognize. The death of the South Baltimore community is mirrors the fate of other pockets of the city where almost all traces of old-line black communities have been wiped out.

Richmondtown was once a bustling city-within-a-city located roughly between Franklin Street and Fremont Avenue northeast to Howard and John Sts.

Revelers once partied at Charlie Burns' "1017" club, and the gleaming neon "AFRO" sign lit up the night sky. But the heart of the neighborhood was ripped out when the state office complex was erected along Eutaw St. between Dolphin St. and Martin Luther king Boulevard. A succession of high-rise city housing projects were built near the southwest corner of Richmondtown.

Today the small homes which once housed generations of blacks are now, as in South Baltimore, being remodelled and sold for high prices to whites moving back into the city.

No one can deny that the end of segregation is a fortunate phenomenom in our society. But the individuals have benefiteed at the expense of the community. The doctor and lawyer produced a leavening effect in a neighborhood also populated by thieves and numbers runners. But now the professionals have fled to Ashburton or Roland Park, while those too poor to move are left to contend with the inevitable problems of the inner city.

Teachers cared about their students because they often shared the same community. Now the students walk home, while the teachers often join the daily exodus to the suburbs.

Pennsylvania Avenue, once described as a gleaming rialto of theaters by the late AFRO columnist Ralph Matthews, has become a strip populated largely by drug addicts and prostitutes.

Of course few blacks regret the passing of segregation.

But as one travels through the ghost towns of our collective past, one sometimes looks back with a wistful sigh at how integration has, ironically, helped break the ties that once bound us closer to ourselves and our now-departed communities.

WE'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE
American Heart Association

—Black voting power

Continued from Page B-8

race pride, and the general election of 1958 was seen as an opportunity to put that pride to the test.

All through the summer of 1958 then, the Fourth District was seen as the battleground for an election which would forever change the balance of power throughout the city. The major newspapers accurately viewed the coalition as a major attempt by blacks to seize control in the Fourth District power.

But the Baltimore News Post the antecedent of the modern Baltimore News American, was more conservative than the Sunpapers. The paper's editors were apparently fearful of the future implications of the historic initiative.

"The backers of this racist group," read an Oct. 24, 1958 Baltimore News Post editorial, "may argue that they are merely copying Pollack's techniques. But this is an admission that they are fighting for dominance, not for fairness, not for the best government for all."

The Pollack forces struck back, predictably enough, but denouncing the coalition as racist. The Pollack organization urged blacks and whites to view the coalition ticket as a step backwards in race relations, in what is perhaps the most incisive analysis of the 1958 Fourth District elections, former Morgan State University professor Dr. G. James Fleming outlined the Pollack tactics.

"Other Pollack adherents echoed the charge of self-segregation into every nook and cranny of the Negro community. It was repeated in meeting after meeting, with all the ills of segregation being colorfully described and roundly condemned. This phase of the campaign had as its backdrop the year's long efforts to abolish segregation anf achieve integration in schools, parks, employment, the armed forces, and other areas," Fleming wrote.

Many bought the Pollack organization's charges. But the Sunpapers quickly seized upon the spectacle of a former segregationist painting himself as an integrationist for the purpose of expediency. An October 4 editorial in the Baltimore Sun noted the reluctance of Irma Dixon to join the all-black coalition, but placed the blame for the racially segregated ticket squarely on the shoulders of Pollack.

"Certainly the Pollack machine was discriminatory when it could ride rough-shod ove the minority Negro," read the commentary. "Mrs. Dixon's appealing statement is in line with the recent Pollack course only because that course had changed — the heavy Negro vote in the Fourth District has now forced non-discrimination on he Pollack machine. What we have here is a machine conversion by harsh reality."

The general elections proved Welcome's mettle as a campaigner. She took to the streets with her volunteers in the Welcome Wagon, a gaily decorated van which daily cruised the streets of the Fourth District. Welcome had the free time and, with her husband's support, the money to conduct a large-scale, professional campaign.

She was also the beneficiary of an effort on the part of an organization called Womanpower, Inc. The group was formned by future Baltimore City Councilwoman Victorine Adams, businesswoman Ethel Rich and others in 1958. The organization's non-partisan goal was the election of the three black women in the race, Dixon, Welcome and Winston.

But as Fleming pointed out, the criticism of the coalition had wide appeal in the black and white community. Charges that Cole supported racial intermarriage, that Cole and the black Republicans planned to take over Fourth District, and other race-baiting tricks were used effectively by Pollack's organization.

Coupled with the organizational strength of the Pollack candidates, the twin powers of racial backlash and the machine proved too much for the all-black coalition.

Portions of this article are from a forthcoming biography of former state Senator Verda P. Welcome.

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